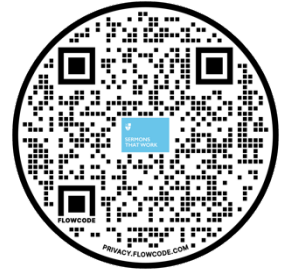




BULLETIN INSERTS

April 14, 2024 – Easter 3 (B) Week 3: Reflections on the Resurrection

During the Easter season, Sermons That Work is pleased to present reflections from some of the newest bishops of The Episcopal Church on the resurrection of our Lord. Check back each week for a brief exploration of how Jesus Christ's rising from the grave changes everything. To listen to this reflection, scan the QR code on this page and subscribe to the Sermons That Work podcast.



When I was a child, our family often went on summer trips across the country. On one of those trips, we signed up for a guided tour of a deep cavern in Arkansas. There were about a dozen in our group. We followed lit pathways to the deepest place in this large cave, and the guide had us all sit down on benches. Then, she turned out all the lights. We sat in utter and complete darkness, several hundred feet underground, for maybe one minute. Then, she lit a single match, and every eye was instantly focused on the glow of that flame.

The first service of Easter – The Great Vigil – begins with the rubric: In the darkness, fire is kindled. At some moment between sundown on Saturday and sunrise on Sunday, God raised the lifeless body of Jesus from death to life in the tomb. On Saturday night or early Sunday morning, churches around the world annually symbolize and celebrate this joyful moment of Jesus' resurrection by lighting a fire in the dark. The fire is blessed, the Paschal Candle is lit, and then the joyful light is shared as candles held by every person in the congregation are lit from it.

It is truly a joyful light that is shared. The resurrection of Jesus means that God's love for us cannot be contained – even by death or a dark tomb. Sin and death do not have the last word over humanity. God does. And, as the Prayer of Humble Access reminds us, God's property is always to have mercy. With the resurrection of Jesus, death is conquered. Jesus is raised and we who follow him are raised to new and eternal life with him.

This eternal life that is offered to us does not begin when our mortal bodies die. It begins now. The power of Christ's resurrection is available to you and to me now. We no longer must live with old fears, old shames, old mistakes, old brokenness, and old patterns that made us less than God intends for us. Our old lives can give way to God's way of love. In our baptisms, we were buried with Christ in his death and raised to new life with him. We are new creations. Our old shames, old mistakes, old sins, are forgiven, buried, and healed. A new way of life, following our resurrected Lord, is ours right now.

When a match was lit in that dark cavern, every eye turned, every head turned, and almost everyone reoriented their bodies to face that new light. May we so live in the power of Christ's resurrection that our hearts, minds, and bodies are reoriented to God's way of love. May we join our resurrected Lord in the work of making all things new.



***The Rt. Rev. Dr. David G. Read** serves as bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas, the sixteenth bishop to serve in West Texas (the eleventh diocesan). He has jurisdiction over 87 congregations within the diocese, including parishes, missions, and church plants ranging in size from 40 members to 2,000 members.*